

DETROIT NEWS
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SALT

Our Opinions

You can be forgiven if you feel that the whole SALT II controversy is remote, complicated, and arcane. You undoubtedly have a lot of company.

Unfortunately, though, it's not a matter conscientious citizens can duck. We have to learn about it and think about it, because what is at stake is the future of Western civilization — and, praise be, that means your and our most essential long-range interests, including life itself.

Perhaps we should state right here something you may already know: Opposition to SALT II is being advanced by some of America's best-informed and most peace-conscious people. These experts understand that, as in the schoolyard, no bully bothers the boy who is prepared to whip him. But the bully is only encouraged to fight the fellow who attempts to make too much of a virtue of reluctance.

Over the past two decades, the Soviet Union has probably achieved superiority over the United States in nuclear strength and certainly in conventional forces, and there is no question at all that if present trends continue, the Russian military advantage will reach the stage by the mid-1980's when the political power stemming from that military advantage will determine the course of world events. That is certain.

So in the days ahead we are going to be spelling out some facts about SALT II that we hope you will think hard about. Today we will simply offer the general opinion that the administration's pro-SALT arguments are fraudulent and reflect dangerous misconceptions about Kremlin thinking, and confine ourselves to one specific aspect of the debate — the administration's line of bull about space satellites and verification.

Space satellites can do truly amazing things. Although their history is short, they have come to be regarded by many as infallible servants of man that work a thousand wonders each time they orbit the globe. Satellite photographs, taken with lenses of astounding resolving power and sent back to earth by sophisticated electronics, provide more accurate weather forecasts, warn of floods or blizzards, and even raise the alarm about an infestation of spruce budworms threatening a forest.

Under the SALT II treaty, which President Carter intends to sign in Vienna this weekend, satellites will be called upon to verify Soviet

compliance. Unfortunately, *satellites can't do the job*.

Satellite photographs can't disclose such vital data as: the number of warheads a missile nose cone contains; the number of missiles concealed elsewhere for quick firing from the cold-launch USSR silos (silos, unlike the U.S. variety, that can be immediately reloaded); the number of air-launch missiles that are stored for use in Backfire bombers; the number of third-stage engines ready to be strapped quickly to intermediate-range SS20 missiles (which carry multiple warheads) to make them intercontinental. Unbelievably, *SS20's are not counted in SALT II*.

Beyond those fatal flaws in satellite surveillance, the Soviets have demonstrated their ability to blind or destroy satellites in space. And two years ago, don't forget, Soviet spies bought the plans to our surveillance satellite and undoubtedly know everything there is to know about it.

Under SALT II, verification also depends on the most simple-minded kind of trust. The Soviet Union promises not to blind or destroy our satellites and also not to encode radio transmissions when testing missiles so that we can monitor these signals and know the throw weight, speed, and range of the weapon. Thus President Carter is gladly making a gentlemen's agreement with the most repeatedly deceitful nation on God's earth.

There's more. U.S. ability to verify Soviet behavior under the agreement has been damaged in two other ways, without any "help" from the Soviet Union. America lost its electronic listening posts in Iran and Turkey after political difficulties in those countries. And, in the post-Watergate era, America's intelligence-gathering system has been emasculated by congressional investigations that drew back too many curtains and ruined too many operations.

In this world, there is no substitute for spies on the ground. Nevertheless, certain people in Washington, including some prominent members of Congress, have succeeded in smashing America's espionage apparatus, to the amazement and delight of Moscow.

Considering all this, or considering only half of it, it's somewhat unnerving to hear President Carter say, as a measure of his confidence, that he wouldn't go to Vienna to sign a SALT agreement that can't be verified if he stays home.

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